

Macalister Demonstration Farm

Projects on the farm are funded by Genetics Australia with support provided by GippsDairy

Macalister Demonstration Farm Update (Week ending October 25th, 2013)

The MDF is now milking 265 cows with 258 in the vat. There are 8 late dry cows, and these are cleaning up odd areas around the farm. There are now 13 springers and these are receiving a strip of grass, 100g/cow/day MagC and ad lib oaten hay.

The daily allocation to milkers has increased to 3ha/24 hours and therefore the round length for milkers is at 24 days over the full farm area (except 1 ha out for springers). It is unlikely to get much shorter. The 11ha cut for silage on 8th October has been watered and boosted with 100kg/ha urea and will be sprayed next week to kill dock weeds prior to grazing around 7 days later. Residuals are at 1400-1500kg/ha but some pastures with high Prairie Grass content are more like 1600kg residuals. The planned pre-topping program did not eventuate as the farm does not yet have a mower, however with one expected to arrive in the next few days, pastures will be topped after grazing where residuals are "hairy" and need removing. The pasture quality has certainly declined over the past week to fortnight, and this has prevented the cows reaching the planned peak of 2.1-2.2kgMS/cow, with protein % in the milk now starting to be under some pressure, having declined by up to 1.5% point over the past two weeks.

The cows are being fed 6kg/cow/day as fed Pasture Gold pellets (12.8MJ) and grass at a cost of \$383/t or 42.6c/kgDM. There is Magnesium and Rumensin included. It is planned that the pellets will alter in the next couple of weeks to a higher protein mix to allow for the poorer pasture quality. These observations and actions are around two to three weeks earlier than expected!

Milk production per cow has dropped slightly again to 26.7 litres and solids are at 1.98 kg MS/cow/day. Milk components are at a 4.12% fat and 3.3% protein.

Daily pasture consumption from the grazing area is at 3400 kg DM /day with the milkers consuming 12.5kg DM per cow per day. On 72ha in the rotation, this equates to a growth rate of 47kgDM/ha/24 hours to hold cover. The growth rate in the last two weeks has been 50kg/ha/day and so very little surplus has developed over the past two weeks, a little surprising for the peak of spring! The first cut was on 8th October and yielded 42 bales (4 feet bales) from 13ha. Whilst the cut was moderate, the quality was great and it kept the milking platform in good quality for the following two weeks. There may be some more silage to cut in the next 3-4 weeks, but quality will be poorer.

The milk price on the components is \$5.27/kg milk solids or 39.12c/litre.

Gross milk income per cow per day is \$10.45 /cow/day. Supplementary feed cost \$2.30/cow/day (concentrates), leaving an Income Over Supplementary Feed Cost (IOSFC) of \$8.15/cow/day or 21 net litres/cow/day, or \$2103/day for the farm. With pasture consumed calculated at 14c/kgDM, the daily net margin after supplements and pasture is \$6.40/cow or \$22.62/ha.

Nitrogen is following milkers at 1kgN/ha/24 hours, as urea.

Broadleaf spraying for dock control will take place selectively.

Poor performing paddocks are being noted now for autumn drilling to thicken the ryegrass content.

Matt Harms, ONFARM Consulting, 0408 311 118 or mattharms7@bigpond.com